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RE:

Comment to FHWA Docket No. FHWA-2001-11130 - 21
Regulation on Traffic Safety in Highway and Street Work Zones

COPY TO:

Ms. Shelley Row
Office of Transportation Operations (HOTO-1)
Federal Highway Administration

COMMENT:

The U.S. Access Board, the Federal agency charged with developing accessibility guidelines for buildings and facilities under the ADA and other statutes, is pleased to have the opportunity to submit comments on this important subject. The Board is currently completing work on proposed guidelines for sidewalks, street crossings, and related pedestrian facilities in the public right-of-way that will include accessibility provisions for work zones that are on or along pedestrian routes. Draft proposed guidelines for public rights-of-way accessibility will be posted to the Board's website (www.access-board.gov) in mid-June, 2002.

All pedestrians, including pedestrians with disabilities, must be considered 'customers' when devising work zone strategies. We recommend that work zone safety planning include the considerations outlined below:

1. Pedestrians who are blind or who have low vision are particularly affected by construction along a pedestrian route. Criteria should include:

- ▶ alternative routes of equivalent safety and usability when existing sidewalks are blocked;
- ▶ audible (e.g., proximity-triggered) and large-print information signage on the location of the alternate route;
- ▶ continuous barriers detectable by cane and through visual contrast;

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- ▶ accessible (audible) signals at signalized crossing where an opposite-side alternate route is used; and
- ▶ careful management of protruding objects, such as scaffolding and signage.

2. Pedestrians who use wheelchairs and scooters will also travel on alternative routes; accessibility criteria include:

- ▶ curb ramps and landings at beginning and end points of alternate routings;
- ▶ a minimum clear passageway of 36 inches for short distances and 60 inches for travel in opposing directions;
- ▶ adequate maneuvering space where changes in direction are required; and
- ▶ reasonably flat, smooth surfaces that provide a least-effort routing.

In addition, care must be taken that temporary signage for driver information does not intrude on the minimum width of the pedestrian route or be located so that it becomes a protruding object for pedestrians.

The ADA implementing regulations promulgated in 1991 by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) require that accessible features (including sidewalks, curb ramps, and street crossings) be maintained in usable condition. Isolated and temporary blockages are permitted, but long-term closures may violate a jurisdiction's program access responsibilities if an alternate route is not available.

In addition, we note that the 20001 edition of the AASHTO Green Book recommends traffic control planning in work areas that results in comparable pedestrian access:

'The goal of any traffic control plan should be to safely route vehicle, bicycle, worker access, and pedestrian traffic, including persons with disabilities, through or around construction areas with geometrics and traffic control devices as nearly comparable to those for normal operating situations as practical...[...] Items that should be considered in developing traffic control plans include the following: [...] In urban areas, diversion provisions for all existing pedestrian flows. The selected diversion paths should include safe roadway crossings, a smooth surface, and adequate width to accommodate persons with disabilities.'

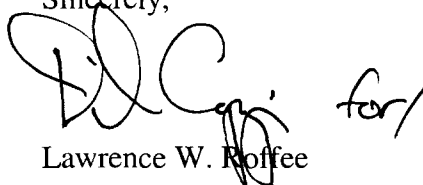
Several jurisdictions, including Washington, DC, stipulate the provision of temporary access on the same side of the street when roadway construction blocks the existing sidewalk. It is our understanding that the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices is considering a similar requirement in the MUTCD.

The Board has had significant input to proposed changes to Part 6 of the new MUTCD and recommends it as a resource in preparing work zone safety regulations that include all users. We are currently collaborating with the Maryland State Highway Administration on a work zone safety publication for contractors in the public right-of-way and are reviewing the draft American Traffic Safety Services Association 'Guide to Temporary Traffic Control for Utility Operations' at the request of FHWA staff.

It is important to consider the effects of work zone disruptions on all roadway users, particularly those whose independence and access to transit require pedestrian access. To do so, the policies, procedures, and tools developed in response to this ANPRM must be based on a broader range of factors than driver convenience and vehicle delay.

Please feel free to contact our staff member Lois Thibault at (202) 272-0023 if you require additional information.

Sincerely,


Lawrence W. Roffee
Executive Director